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Economic Science Crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Midst of the Economic Crisis

Ibreljić Izet

In the context of the continuing economic crisis the issue of where the Bosnian economics is today is often raised as well as the issue of whether it can act in concert with economic practices and contribute to finding adequate solutions to mitigate the effects and create a way out of the current economic crisis. The intellectual world, in the economic field in particular, should certainly provide answers to these questions in the spirit of scientific truth which, at first glance, is not very complicated, because as E. Husserl declared long time ago “objective truth of science consists solely in determining what the world, both physical and spiritual, really is.” Certainly, the development of comprehensive anti-crisis solutions, political and economic decisions in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina should be harmonized in view of the fact that every political decision ultimately has its economic consequences. Therefore, it is now particularly important to synchronize the political and economic efforts in order to achieve optimal activation of all available BiH’s development potential.

Radical economic reforms that are being promoted (truth to be told – for the time being only in words) as a priority of the newly formed Bosnian Government met with the general support in large segments of society. However, in order to achieve any of the set goals and mitigate the consequences of a previously valid neoliberal economic conception of life, it is necessary to, inter alia, take advantage of the ability and knowledge of economics of both politically unburdened academic economists and many entrepreneurs that have proven themselves in economic practice. In addition, given that we live at the end of the tycoon-style led political life i.e. at a time in which tycoons (special social group that emerged first from the political elite and later from other generally suspicious social groups) have become part of the wider economic establishment in the country, we should keep in mind their significant involvement in future decision-making and implementation of key economic tasks in the region.

In order to implement the proclaimed reforms, it is essential, however, to change many things in the BiH society since the current situation is not at all time appropriate. The impact of BiH economic science on economic decisions of importance for the country today is limited for two important reasons:

1. political elite in BiH has already provided “their” economists, “hired intellectual workers” who act according to the instructions of “their” parties and create their

- “own” opinion on the economic future of the Bosnian state and
2. rare independent intellectuals of economic profile who are well familiar with economic problems in the scientific and practical aspects and experienced entrepreneurs are not sufficiently engaged in this field for various reasons and even when they do engage the political elite does not pay attention to their proposals and suggestions.

Economists-conformists incorporated into the political structure (and often accomplices in the tycoon-style of economic life in the country) dominate the Bosnia and Herzegovina’s economic scene today. They, as a rule, support the status quo and are, more or less, great admirers of neo-liberal ideology (not always by conviction but as a party task) which provides them with a comfortable life.

Distinguished (generally nonpartisan) academic economists and proven successful entrepreneurs have been completely marginalized. Creating a debate space in which empirical analytical discussions and concrete problems of Bosnian economy would dominate is not in the interests of the political elite. Dominance is within the futile speculation and more or less hidden support to dictates of the IMF, the World Bank, USAID, etc. and their operationalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s economic policies.

Those that are particularly visible in the media scene today are conspicuous economists-critics who are ready (in order to promote themselves) to declare every economic decision as poor without ever proposing their own realistically implementable solution. These are mostly “salon” economists with no practical experience in industry, academic quasi elite encapsulated in the Balkans and conceited theatrics prone individuals that bring more harm than good to Bosnian society. Such people are, in this time of lost values, the most prominent “crisologists” and propagators of economic development concepts that can be realized only in a functional state and BiH today is very far from that.

Young Guard of capable economists, educated at home or at prestigious foreign universities, usually acts on the outskirts because it is not materially motivated to get involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s economic reality in any way. Those who have gained a diploma without the knowledge (in the domestic market with its current supply and demand) or were trained in second-rate foreign educational institutions, are realistically not very useful. A lot of talk with no real foundation – that is the reality of the local economic scene.

BiH Academy of Arts and Sciences (leaving aside the three “ethnically cleansed Academies”) has (and it is not only related to the economic profession) largely lost its dignity. This association with appropriate scientific references must comply with regional, gender and ethnic criteria, and in order to become a member it is desirable to frequently “adopt” a certain number of projects for its existence hence there is less fair social and intellectual selection when entering ANUBiH i.e. Inflation of “suitable” academics is present. Here, we must mention the occasional non-academic arguments, needless controversies, instances of media covered out-talking of individual academics with downgraded academic discourse, and so on.

This indicates that the BiH economists today are quite distant from the key economic problems in the country. Let us mention just some of them:

1. Instead of a development strategy at the national level that would be confirmed by Parliament some regional and local development documents ,which are often worthless, are being launched today and intellectuals are being used as wage workers of various profiles,
2. The political elite has been launching these energy projects (whose realization should have started long time ago) for a while now and purely for their daily political purposes in accordance with the old principle that it is important to promise something to the people without understanding the realistic economic complexity of the task in question,
3. Political and economic response to the population decline and other population related challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not exist.
4. Economic regionalization of the country as one of the conditions for EU access is not yet in sight, etc...

The education system in the economic sphere today (leaving aside other areas) is in a particular crisis but unfortunately there is very little talk of it. Inflation of titles and not knowledge has been here for a long time. Activities of the emerging political elite, as it strives to create its own and naturally obedient economic and intellectual potential, are especially dangerous for the future of BiH society . A lot has been done, gradually , on that plan. First, the post-war science titles were awarded to selected representatives of the political elite usually with the help of war-time or immediate post-war produced university teachers whose scientific quality and professional authority (with a few honorable exceptions) is very much to be doubted. Master's and doctoral theses from that time were often ideologically colored and often resembled certain segments of political party programs. In some cases it was necessary to provide for the offspring, relatives and friends of some newly produced "scientists" and political workers in the same manner thus giving the impression that each party ruler or a local politician could, with the help of a teacher - a complex ridden quasi intellectual, achieve his/her educational objectives. If, however, a problem did appear a "better" review committee was formed. All this is very reminiscent of the once famous aphorism of Duško Radović: "unlike PhDs farmers have more knowledge than education." The "new economic elite" (in the economic sphere but also in other areas), which should provide a better future for BiH society, is created and its creators did not consider the unforeseeable damage they cause to the community in which they live. It follows, therefore, that today, more than ever, it is necessary to defend the science from those who defended their master's thesis and doctoral dissertations.

With these types of relations in terms of multiplication of academic mediocrity, youth from the lower classes, with a much higher intellectual capacity, has very limited opportunities for advancement in science. If we bear in mind that the labor market favors relationships, bribery, party affiliation, etc., it will take them a long time after school to find any job or they will probably just go abroad not forgetting the moral degradation of Bosnian society and the intellectual and academic prostitution of their teachers.

Higher education, especially in the field of economic science, is particularly degraded

by the expansion of the network of private faculties. More and more of these faculties are emerging every year in the economic areas related to management, marketing, finance, trade, etc., and they emerge for commercial and political reasons. The problem of lack of personnel in those faculties is solved, more so than at the state universities, through overproduction of staff among their own children, relatives, friends, etc... The defragmented and corrupt Bosnian society is powerless to do anything in this area although it is aware that money is the main guarantee of a quick and easy access to diploma in such cases as well as and that it creates excessive damage to the society. Some owners of these faculties often establish cooperation with less respectable foreign universities bringing in foreign teachers with great publicity, organizing "scientific" excursions abroad, etc... all with the aim of achieving the greatest possible profits. In contrast to the prominent private universities abroad that are managed by the board of directors (who are famous scientists) in which the revenue from tuition is mainly channeled into investments the tuition fees in these universities and their so-called. "Branch departments" are directed towards the owner. Activation of ignorance and overproduction of quasi intellectuals has, as it can be seen, proven itself to be a very profitable business in our region. This, however, does not concern the local political elite given its more or less clandestine participation in this educational arrangement.

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